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by  
AGNES  
LEE

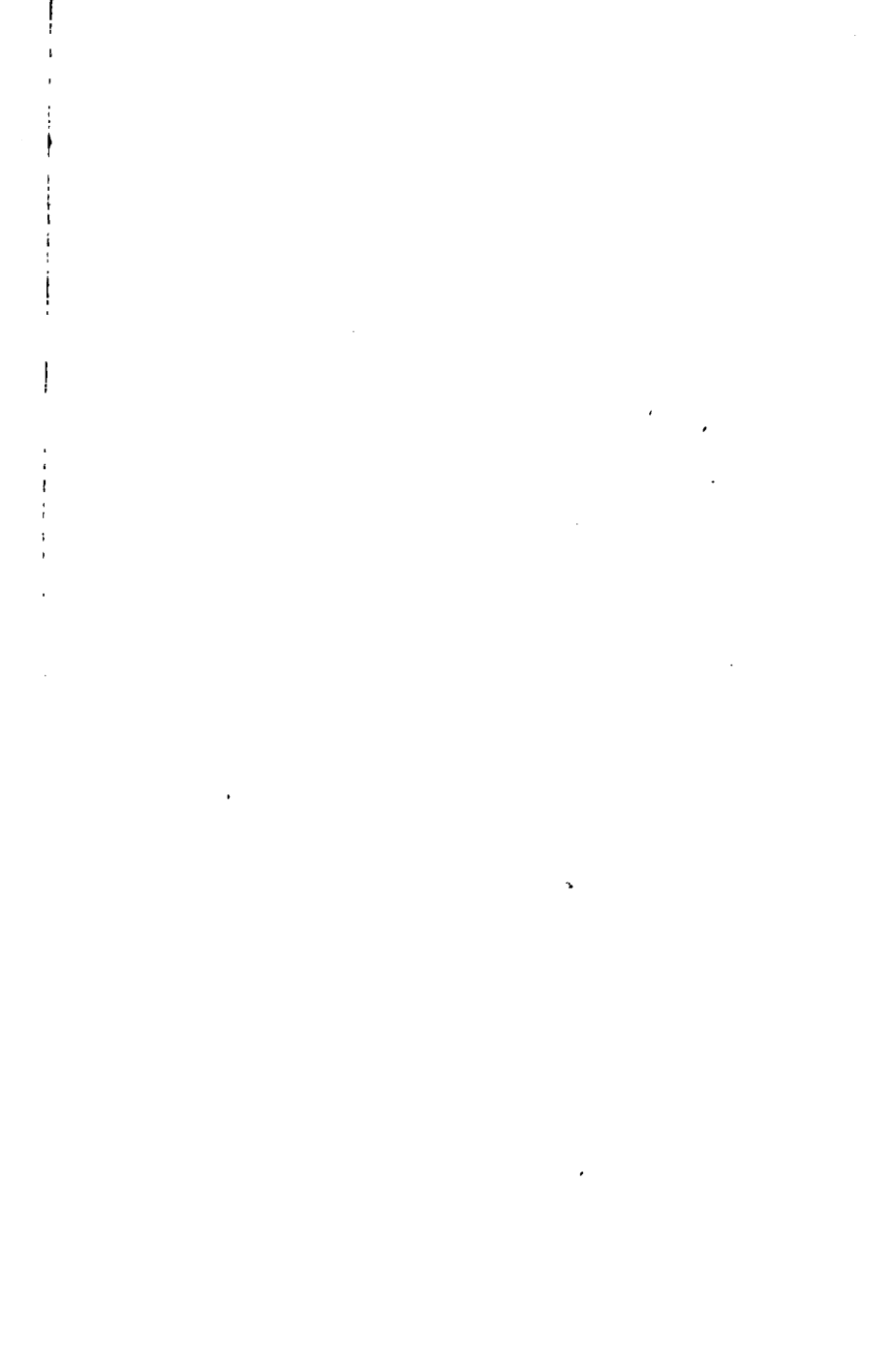


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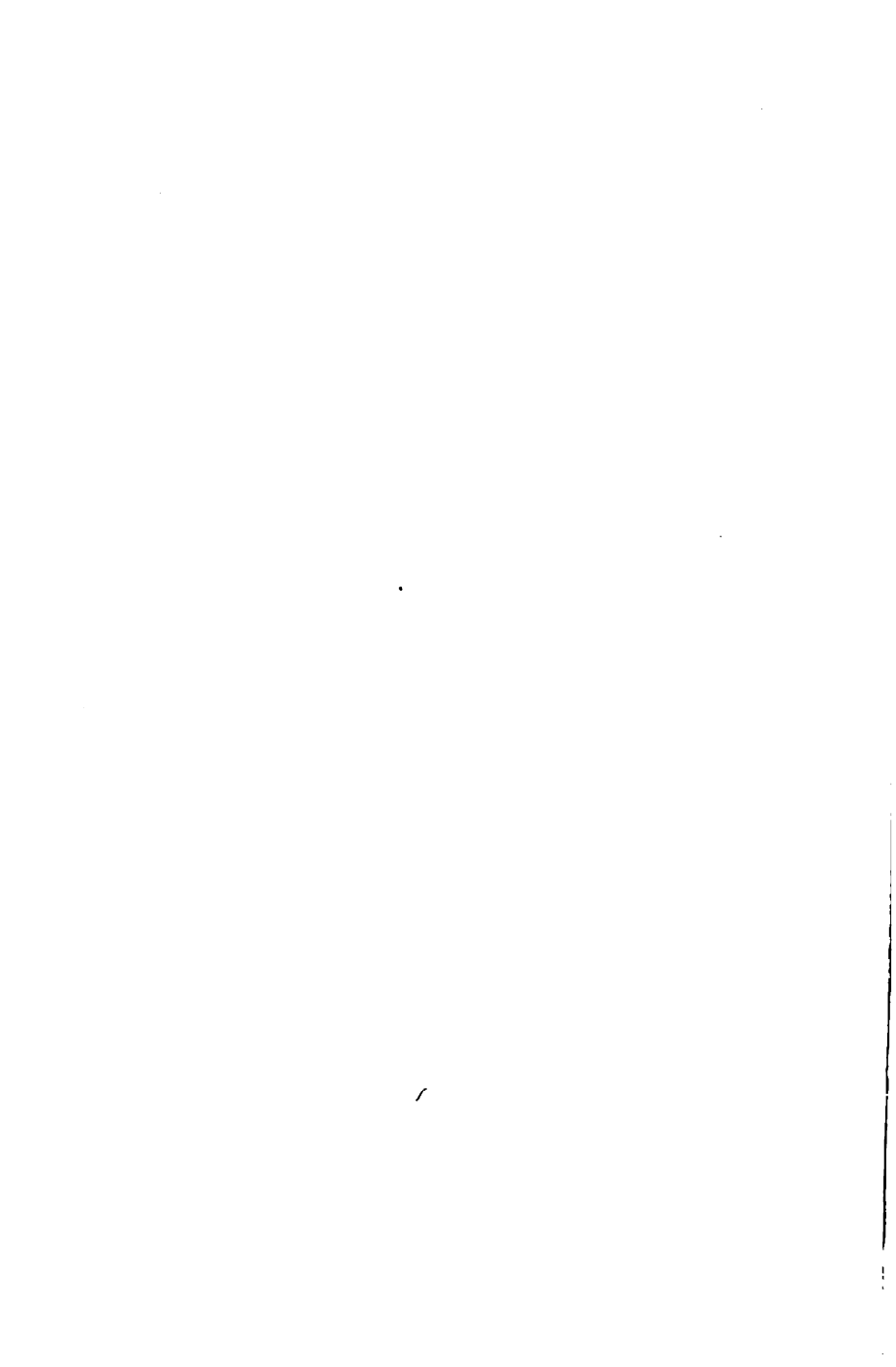












# **FACES AND OPEN DOORS**



# FACES AND OPEN DOORS

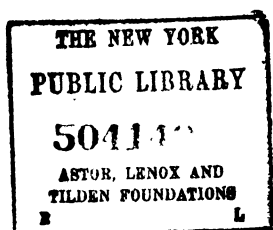
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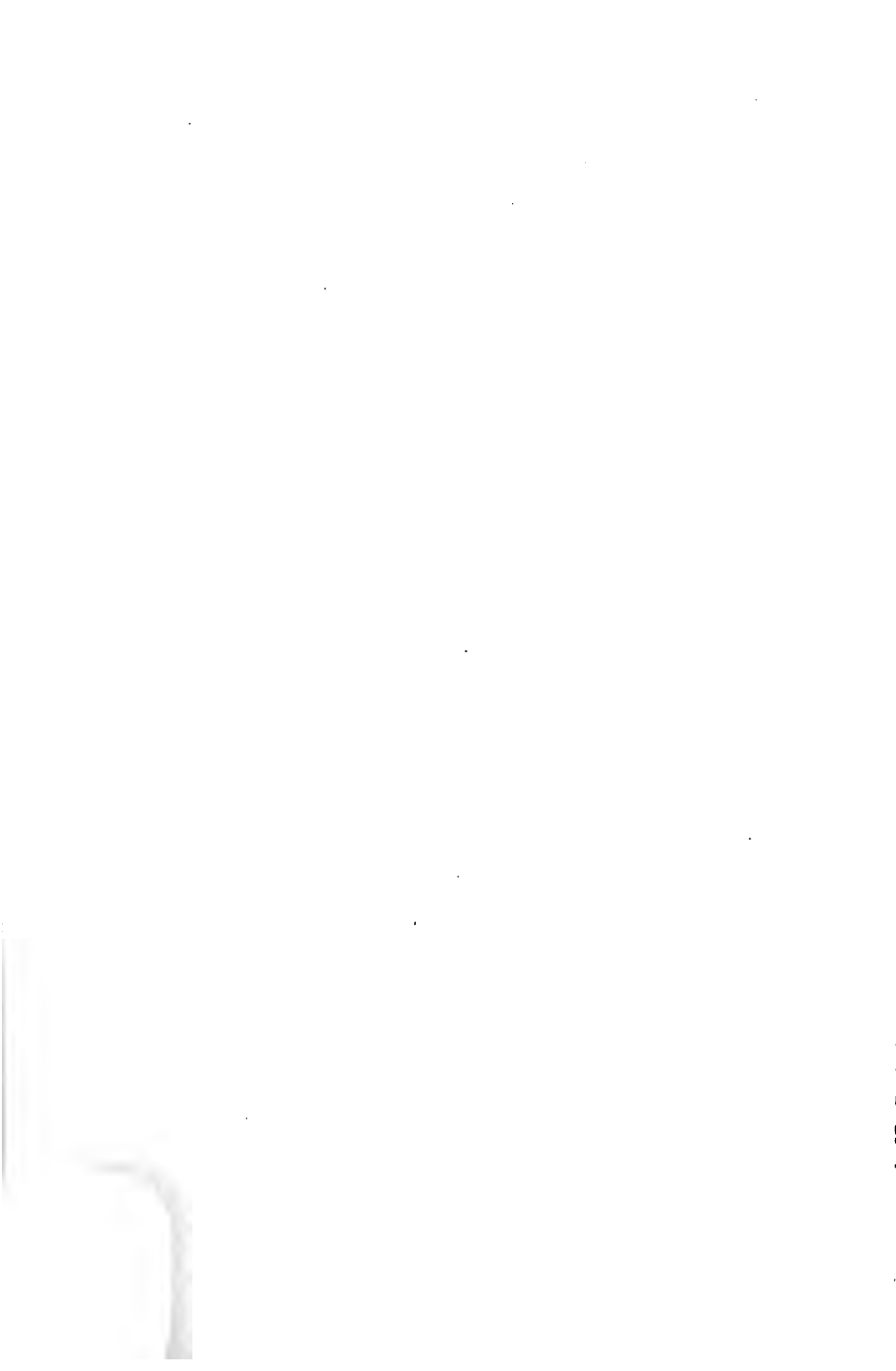


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**T**HIS book contains many of my recent poems, and I have selected and revised others, from my former volumes, to bear them company.

For kind permission for reprinting I thank: *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse, The North American Review, The Atlantic Monthly, The Bookman, The Dial, Collier's, The Bellman, The Youth's Companion, The Poetry Journal and The Craftsman.*





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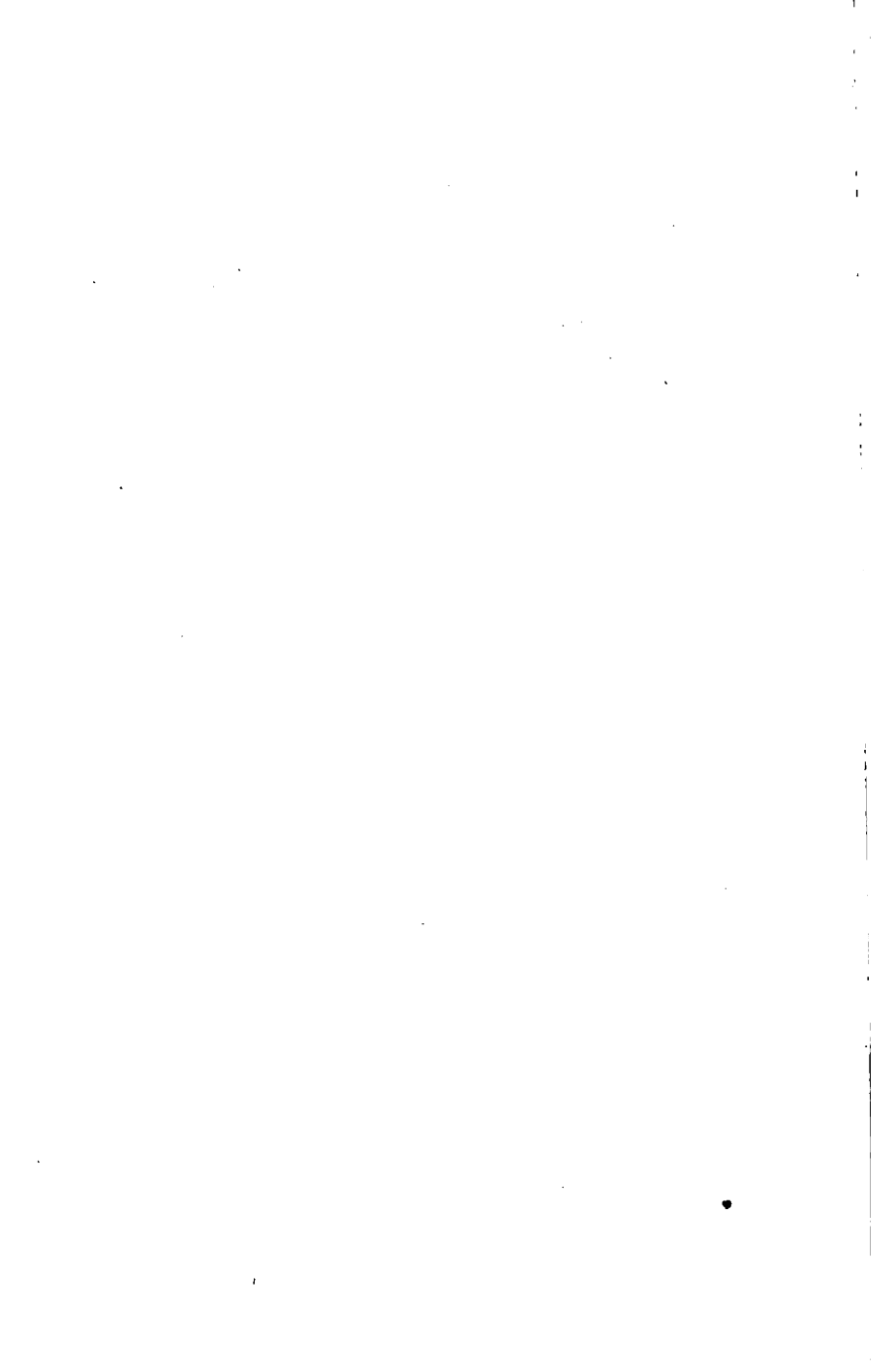
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I

2 2 2



## FACES AND OPEN DOORS

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### I

---

#### AN OLD WOMAN WITH FLOWERS

I like to see the eager-faced old woman  
Walking at sunset down the city street.  
Always she holds against her heart with  
    fervor  
Her sprays of meadow-sweet.

She passes daily, and I never see her  
Without the flowers she gathers to her so.  
I do not know how destiny softens,  
    hardens  
The ways her feet must go,

Nor what her eyes forever are beholding  
Beyond the sordid walls and grimy towers,  
Nor what against her aged heart she  
    presses,  
Pressing the meadow flowers.



### OLD LIZETTE ON SLEEP

Bed is the boon for me!  
It's well to bake and sweep,  
But hear the word of old Lizette:  
It's better than all to sleep.

Summer and flowers are gay,  
And morning light and dew;  
But agèd eyelids love the dark  
Where never a light seeps through.

What!—open-eyed, my dears,  
Thinking your hearts will break?  
There's nothing, nothing, nothing, I say,  
That's worth the lying awake!

I learned it in my youth—  
Love I was dreaming of!  
I learned it from the needle-work  
That took the place of love.

I learned it from the years  
And what they brought about;  
From song, and from the hills of joy  
Where sorrow sought me out.

It's good to dream and turn,  
And turn and dream, or fall  
To comfort with my pack of bones,  
And know . . . nothing at all!

Yes, never know at all  
If prowlers mew or bark,  
Nor wonder if it's three o'clock  
Or four o'clock of the dark.

When the longer shades have fallen  
And the last weariness  
Has brought the sweetest gift of life,  
The last forgetfulness,

If a sound as of old leaves  
Stir the last bed I keep,  
Then say, my dears: "It's old Lizette—  
She's turning in her sleep."

### BARK-BOUND

In her home a woman I know  
Is a bark-bound tree;  
The flowers bloom at her feet,  
But she does not see.

The knife has glittered by  
To the forest to prune,  
And left her deaf to the wind,  
Blind to the moon.

She must live on her sap  
In her ease and dark,  
Until she shrivels and dies  
In her walls of bark,—

Unless the glittering knife  
Should return her way,  
And set its steel to the bark,  
And let in day.

### THE SWEEPER

Frail, wistful guardian of the broom,  
The dwelling's drudge and stay,  
Whom destiny gave a single task—  
To keep the dust away!

Sweep off the floor and polish the chair.  
It will not always last.  
Some day, for all your arms can do,  
The dust will hold you fast.

### CONVENTION

The snow is lying very deep,  
My house is sheltered from the blast.  
I hear each muffled step outside,  
I hear each voice go past.

But I'll not venture in the drift  
Out of this bright security,  
Till enough footsteps tread it down  
To make a path for me.

## THE BROKEN CHAIN

How the wind blew,  
And the snow threw  
Its ermine softness at my window-pane!  
Now I am there again,  
In the old house as once on a winter night.  
About the rooms I stray,  
A stranger, yet at home forevermore.  
A creak of the floor—  
Why, here comes Natalie,  
Here's Gordon tiptoeing to me,  
Holding his candle high.  
Children, children, I have come back—  
yes, I!

What has become of the house I have  
forsworn?  
What other living shades  
Bring their new happiness to room and  
hall?  
I see them not at all,  
As here I sit, a mother miles away,  
And roam the rooms and roam the rooms  
till morn.

## MRS. MALOOLY

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest,  
Who scrubbed Manhattan's marble aisles.  
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten  
The mop and broom  
And the patterned tiles.

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest  
In the smooth-dug loam, to a rest so deep  
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten  
The unmade bed  
And the whiskey sleep.

## THE JILT

I

Let other feet go drudging  
About the house he built!  
A free girl, a jilted girl,  
I'm glad he was a jilt.

We quarrelled till it almost  
Destroyed my breath of life.

He nagged me and bullied me,  
As if I'd been his wife.

II

We grew cold and bitter  
The more we would explain,  
And if we held our tongues  
The worse it was again.

He flashed a cruel sign,  
I flashed a cruel word,  
And neither could forget  
The blame the other heard.

III

But his eyes could be tender with love, and  
his voice, how tender!  
Some words he sang are with me the whole  
day through.  
I hang out the linen and burnish the brass  
and copper,  
And they won't go out of my head, what-  
ever I do.

Strange how they come when I feel alone  
and forsaken,  
How they wake me up when the dawn in  
my room is hazy,

How they drug me asleep when the night  
has darkened my pillow!—  
Ah, a song will sing in your head when  
your heart is crazy!

IV

What can I do but sit here and shake,  
And let the windows rattle mournfully,  
While Sunday brings him never and  
Monday brings him not,  
And winter hides the town away from  
me?—

Dreaming how he drew my soul from  
my lips,  
Seeming just to hear forevermore  
What my heart tells the clock, what the  
clock tells my heart,  
Dreaming back the springtime at my door?

V

Why should I curl my hair for him?  
He said the trouble couldn't be mended,  
He said it must be good-by and go,  
And he took up his hat, and all was ended.  
So all was over. And I'm not dead!  
And I've shed all the tears I'm going to  
shed!



And now he's wanting to come again?  
Perhaps he's sorry, perhaps he misses  
The hill-top girl. Well, let him come!  
But no more love and no more kisses.  
Whatever the future, gay or grim,  
Why should I curl my hair for him?

VI

I shall go out in the sun to-day,  
I don't know whether to laugh or pray.  
For along the waking paths of spring  
Bird calls to bird till the branches ring.

Something stirs me—spring's own will—  
To wander to the edge of the hill,  
Where I can see as I look down  
Patches of green on the gray old town.

## IN THE MORGUE

She who walked with flaming dress  
And the gems of idleness,

She who counted in her troop  
Young man Dream and old man Dupe,

Comes at last to lay her head  
Here among the unclaimed dead.

She was weary as the sages  
With the riddle of the ages,

Saying to midnight: "Whether or no,  
Half the world is builded so;"

Saying to morn: "Come do your  
mocking!—

But there's money in my stocking!"

Now, with strong, insistent voice  
Calling, urging to the choice,

More than gems or loves that were,  
The stern sea has tempted her.

### THE LONELY GIRL

Alone to walk, alone to weep,  
Alone to face the final sleep!

I heard the music of the trees  
Forever choiring in the breeze,

And in the woods the flowers that mass  
And shake afar their bells of glass.

On a high tower I set my light,  
And waited, waited through the night.

I set my signal over me.  
But no one passed upon the sea.

### RAINDROPS

She thought the rain would surely bring  
His dear familiar tap,  
Earth's every little upward thing  
Wore such a silver cap.

She knew he loved the raindrops, and  
She blessed the gleaming gems,  
Or laughed to think his forehead crowned  
With such cool diadems.

Upon the path she heard them beat,  
And whispered low his name.  
Sometimes she took them for his feet,  
His feet that never came.

She heard them falling in the rills,  
And wept for what might be,  
Nor caught the music on the hills  
Of other destiny.

#### THE WANDER-WOMAN

I roam the town and woods  
From height to height securely.  
And if I love no man,  
I love no woman, surely.  
Oh, give me day and the golden sun  
And night with never a goal,  
And never a love that's worth the love,  
But the love of a child's young soul!

Rains, rains, rains!  
The waters claim each other,  
The heaven-lost waters march  
Back to the sea, their mother.

There's always a roof till clearing comes  
And we roam from sun to sun.  
They are more than the price of a crust  
and bed,  
The smiles of my little one.

The tide beats out the hour,—  
The turbulent reminder!  
Humans we meet are kind,  
The birds and beasts are kinder.  
Then up the road and over the wild,  
And through the darkest door,  
With ever and ever a little child  
That skips and trips before.

~ ~ ~

## II

~ ~ ~



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## II

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### THE ANCIENT SINGER

The wonder of our century!  
They sing it stave on stave,  
They sing it loud, they sing it long,  
New voices, risen brave.

The ring of it, the thrill of it,  
Is over every sea;  
And some are great enough to sing,  
And some have missed the key.

But I must be content to stand  
Upon an old highway  
And sing the sleeping centuries  
Whose dreams are towers to-day.

### A STATUE IN A GARDEN

I was a goddess till the marble found me.  
Wind, wind, delay not!  
Waft my spirit where the laurel crowned  
me!  
Will the wind stay not?



Then tarry, tarry, listen, little swallow!  
A past glory feeds me—  
I lay upon the bosom of Apollo!  
Not a bird heeds me.

For here the days are alien. Oh, to waken  
Mine, mine, with calling!  
But on my shoulders bare, like hopes  
forsaken,  
The dead leaves are falling.

The sky is gray and full of unshed weeping  
As dim down the garden  
I wait and watch the early autumn  
sweeping.  
The stalks fade and harden.

The souls of all the flowers afar have  
rallied.  
The trees, gaunt, appalling,  
Attest the gloom, and on my shoulders  
pallid  
The dead leaves are falling.

## MOTHERHOOD

Mary, the Christ long slain, passed  
silently,

Following the children joyously astir  
Under the cedrus and the olive-tree,  
Pausing to let their laughter float to her.  
Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,  
She saw a little Christ in every face.

Then came another woman gliding near  
To watch the tender life which filled the  
place.

And Mary spoke to her: "I know thee not,  
And yet I know the same heart-hunger-  
ings send

Our footsteps here; for the children bring  
us back

Something . . . something we lost.

O stranger, friend,

"I, too, have rocked my lovely One.  
And He was fair!

He was more luminous than the sun,  
And like its rays through amber was  
His sun-bright hair.

Still I can see it shine and shine."

"Even so," the woman said, "was  
mine."

"His ways were ever darling ways"—  
And Mary smiled—  
"So soft, so clinging! All our days  
Were jewels strung on cords of love.  
My Little Child!  
My vanished star! My music fled!"  
"Even so was mine," the woman said.

And Mary whispered: "Tell me, thou,  
Of thine." And she:  
"Oh, mine was rosy as a bough  
Blooming with roses, and his eyes  
Had lights of the sea!  
His balmy fingers left a thrill  
Deep in my breast that warms me  
still."

Then she gazed down some wilder, darker  
hour,  
And said—when Mary questioned,  
knowing not,  
"Who art thou, mother of so sweet a  
son?"—  
"I am the mother of Iscariot."

## BACH AT THE ORGAN

He gropes amid the gray  
Of the shadowy loft. Ascending,  
He sees the angels bending  
To light the old stairway.

Enthroned before the keys,  
The humble citizen  
Builds for a world of men  
A world of harmonies.

Oh, eager, sensitive hands!  
What now are earthly kings?  
King by heaven's grace, he flings  
The full tone that expands

Till sound-paths newly trod  
Lead up the heights of wonder,  
And in the organ's thunder  
Thunders the voice of God.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Man's music changes  
With the changing of his hours,  
Though birds trill the same songs  
They trilled from Petra's towers.

Always  
From ancient hallways  
He led through beauty's ample rooms,  
Out to her rain-drenched flower and  
frond,  
Out to her suns . . . beyond . . . beyond.  
Ah! did we call his art a whim,  
Before we woke to him?

High above war  
His music, rising past the stars,  
Is heard at heaven's door.  
Heaven opens to the soul of song,  
And to an art which never ends  
The soul of song ascends.

## SHAKESPEARE

Because, the singer of an age, he sang  
The passions of the ages,  
It was humanity itself that leaped  
To life upon his pages.

He told no single being's tale—he forced  
All beings to his pen.  
And when he made a man to walk the  
street  
Forth walked a million men.

## THE SINGER OF THE SHADOWS

*If I could dwell  
Where Israfel  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,  
He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,—  
While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.*

*—Edgar Allan Poe.*

From far beyond all death, beyond all  
dark,  
Fateful, sublime,  
The singer of the shadows came to mark  
His land, his time.

Poet of grief, he sought her loneliest cave,  
Her ultimate aisle,  
Her ruined keep, her moldering  
architrave  
And peristyle.

Poet of tombs, the midnight was his  
theme.

Adventuring far,  
He pierced the opal center of a dream,  
Or of a star.

Let those who walk with lore the beaten  
road

From others ask  
The daily bread of thought, cheer for the  
load,  
Sun for the task.

There is an hour when sunshine brings to  
pain  
Unfaith, unrest,  
When she would feel the footfalls of the  
rain  
Upon her breast.

Then, circled in a misty aureole,  
His charm distils  
A craved narcotic for the fevered soul,  
From sorrow's hills.

Now for the hidden miles his wandering  
pressed  
Sweet is our soil.

His dust has come to bloom, the light has  
blessed  
The darkness of his toil.

England acclaims him. France, attuned,  
aware,  
Greets him with bay,



And calls him brother, through her  
Baudelaire  
And Mallarmé.

Too long have lettered dwarf and  
neophyte  
Cast him their stones,  
Who flesh beheld, not spirit, worked their  
blight  
Above his bones.

Enough of slander! Bolted be the gate  
To evils wild  
Envies evolve and lies perpetuate!  
Art owns her child.

Cradle him softly, Art! O let him live  
Secure, apart,  
Who, earthbound, gave you all he had to  
give—  
His tortured heart!

Pride has departed, Doom has crossed  
the door,  
Love calls farewell.  
But from your firmament forevermore  
Shines Israfil!

SONG OF A QUEEN OF LOMBARDY,

Only an hour, and his heart was beating.  
Now he laughs in a ghostly sheeting,  
Still in his dream the sin repeating.

Sea, sea,  
Quiet me.  
Wash off my crown and my dress.  
Throw the weight of your wave,  
Cover me with forgetfulness  
And let me sleep in my grave!

This is the night the trees were shaken.  
This is the night of the soul-forsaken.  
This is the night he shall not waken.

Sea, sea,  
Quiet me.  
Cool of the infinite,  
Roll to me, roll to me, roll!  
Bury my body's hands of white,  
And the crimson hands of my soul!

## THE LAST HOME

Apart I lie, below the passing feet,  
In the last home at last.  
Ah well, in the old days I have been  
proud!  
Now meekness holds me fast.  
I have been friend to power: my face is  
graven  
On many a coin and ring.  
Once to my hearth a lordly praetor came,  
And once an orient king.  
They left their sounding praises in my  
ears,  
Their jewels on my breast.  
But now in my humility I wait  
To house a meaner guest.  
Then, little worm, come in! And, Time,  
forget  
The perfect flower you bore!  
Ah yes, I have been proud in the old days!  
But I am proud no more. 4

~ ~ ~

# III

~ ~ ~



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### III

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#### THE QUEST

I am the ancient memory-mother.  
I shake my gray locks in the sun,  
I shake them out as I run, run.  
What are you seeking, weary other?

*Sometimes I almost overtake it,  
The dream I lost one day, and then  
The dream will slip away again.  
The quest is long. Shall I forsake it?*

Follow the trail on, hourly, yearly,  
Over the dark in the willow-brook,  
Over the dawn; and look, and look,  
And close your eyes, to see more clearly.

#### TWO HOUSES

House of the past, house of the sunken  
stair,  
In somnolence of long untrodden grass!  
Tragedy, pleasure, sin have crossed your  
door.  
Your crumbling gables are no longer fair,

And all the sigh of all the heaven may pass  
Along your desert floor.

And you, the newly-built, firmly set,  
Wide-halled, with gleaming porch and  
peristyle,

You, with your shining gables sound and  
whole!

What shall you say, O house of no regret,  
Proud in your strength, but with an  
ignorant smile

Still waiting for your soul!

#### TEARING THE OLD HOUSE DOWN

They are tearing the old house down.

The roof makes way for the sky.

With hammering blows on rooms and  
halls

They hush the voices within the walls,

Hush, hush, hush,—

For the old, the old must go.

Fall, cornice and beam!

Up, hearthstone and floor!

They had battered a door almost in two

When a little ghost with a doll pushed  
through . . .  
Perhaps it is better so . . .  
For the old, the old must go.

#### BEFORE SLEEP

O child of struggle, here's the night!  
Then rest, then rest.  
Let peace come nestle on your brow.  
Put out the light—

Nor back to the old battle hark.  
Draw down the shades,  
Put out the light. And in your soul  
Put out the dark.



### THE DREAM CHILD

What fragrance is here  
In this house on the wild  
That nevermore thrills  
To the step of a child?—

Some shred of a dream  
Love may never retake,  
That drifted away  
And left in its wake

The warmth of a presence,  
The rays of a light?  
I know only this:  
She was with me last night.

### CLOUD AND FLOWER

I saw the giant stalking to the sky,  
The giant cloud above the wilderness,  
Bearing a mystery too far, too high  
For my poor guess.  
So I turned away,  
Saying: "I have had enough of mystery!"

Now something little, intimate, shall  
speak."

A bright rose stirred.

And long I looked into its face, to see  
A simple revelation of the hour.

.....

And I had thought to turn from mystery—  
But O, flower! flower!

#### A NESTING LINNET

Skyward above the mist and heather  
She and her nimble comrades flew.  
The clearest note the morning knew  
Was hers, when, rallying down the blue,  
They circled in the sun together.

Since then, with but a flower's tassel,  
An osier blown across the moor,  
To make her fateful walls secure,  
With symmetry how graced and sure  
She wove her garnerings to a castle!

No outer import shall entrance her.  
The comrades skim the hillock's brow

To maple bough, to willow bough,  
And, near her darkened chamber, now  
They call her, and she will not answer.

She was so shy with every human  
Before she nested in our tree.  
Now she forgets the wilder wood,  
Glad to be small and understood.

NOVEMBER 11, 1918

Suddenly bells and flags!  
Suddenly—door to door—  
Tidings! Can we believe,  
We, who were used to war?

Yet we have dreamed of Peace,  
Knowing her light must be,  
Knowing that she must come.  
Look—she comes, it is she!

Tattered her raiment floats,  
Blood is upon her wings.  
Ah, but her eyes are clear!  
Ah, but her glad heart sings!

Soon where the shrapnel fell  
Petals will wake and stir.  
Look—she is here, she lives!—  
Beauty has died for her.

A BLINDED SOLDIER DICTATES A  
LETTER

I know you only by your tears. . .  
I felt them falling on my hair. . .  
I had wakened in a hush of dark  
Upon a cot, I knew not where.

Dear lady, I was full of dread,  
And bitter with my destiny.  
And then—the feel of your soft dress,  
And you were bending over me.

Ah! the warm touches of your soul  
Guided me to the shadowed years,—  
Light of my dark forever,—though  
I know you only by your tears!

## WAVE, WAVE

Wave, wave,  
You seem to be dreaming—  
Wave, wave—  
In the sunshine warm.  
Wave, wave,  
What are you, what are you—  
Wave, wave—  
Of the changing form?

*I am a round bright beautiful wave.  
All day with my ripples the shore I pave.*

Wave, wave,  
They say you are pitiless—  
Wave, wave—  
When the ships outroam.  
Wave, wave,  
They call you a savior—  
Wave, wave—  
When the ships come home.

*I have no thought for a life or a grave.  
I am a round bright beautiful wave.*

## THE WRECK

See, there the wreck is lying—a league  
from shore!

The crew were feasting when the crash  
was heard.

One long vibration, and the ship was  
calm,

Till faces cut the fog along the deck.

And then the sun came out upon a pale,  
Gray field of glass, while darkly here and  
there

Life's lovers rose and sank, or desperately,  
With curses, clung to timbers that  
betrayed.

I wonder, was there one among them all  
Who had waited for the signalling of  
chance,

Who hailed the shock, and pierced the  
deep with praise?

### A HINT OF SPRING

Drops of rain and drops of sun,  
And the air is amber spun.  
From the winter's coma pass  
Gleaming shivers over the grass.  
Sparks of memory  
Flash upon the soul;  
While a roadway child  
Thrusts arbutus, gay  
From a valley full of bloom.  
Earth's exultant hope finds room,  
And the poorest, in the shower,  
Longs to buy a little flower.

### THE CHANGELING

I met a threadbare waif below the town.  
His eyes were sad, and from his dusty  
coat  
Roses no longer crimson drooped and fell;  
Pebbles which had been kisses bound his  
throat.

He held a cup and listlessly drank wine,  
As one who knew not what he was drinking of.

And when I asked his name he answered  
low:

“My name is Habit—once they called me  
Love.”

### THE SIGN

Her smiling is the sun for me,  
Though in her eyes the rain-floods dwell.  
For I, who know her heart so well,  
Through love's divining,  
Can see the sudden sign, can see,  
Like to a gold-swept amethyst  
Within the sunlight and the mist  
Love's rainbow shining.



### LONG DISTANCE LINE

More wonderful than all my joy was this:  
To know the sudden nearness of his mood,  
To know that for a moment we, apart,  
Together stood.

That same low voice across my garden-  
beds  
Might not have reached my ear, for wind,  
or bird.  
But it has spoken across a thousand miles!  
And I have heard!

### ASPIRATION

The running waves sigh,  
The cliffs are so high!  
The rising cloud weeps,  
So high the star creeps!  
And you, little heart,  
You are misty with tears  
As the opaline star,—  
Love's face is so far!

## AT DAWN

They were all around me.  
Soft as petals shaken  
Summer faces bound me  
In a balmy zone.  
It is strange to waken  
And be alone.

Outer sounds pierce coldly.  
Day begins to battle.  
Wheels come . . . faintly . . . boldly,  
Crunching through the ice,  
And the milk-jars rattle,  
Like frozen dice.

Let me turn a moment  
To fathom one more dream,  
Find the warm seduction  
Of a grove in flower . . .  
Drain the dregs of slumber . . .  
Forego the hour.

### THE ILEX TREE

What spirit touched the faded lambrequin  
And slept? The crumbling doorway's  
    lintel, rosed

With age, overlooks a stunted ilex tree  
Grown in the middle path. Its branches  
    guard

The house in silence, or with green dark  
    gesture

Spreading protection, whisper pleadingly:  
"The past is asleep behind the lambrequin.

Do not go in.

The door is closed."

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# IV

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## IV

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### NUMBERS

*Numbers are so much the measure of everything that is valuable that it is not possible to demonstrate the success of any action or the prudence of any undertaking without them.*

Steel, Spectator, No. 174

In all they brood,  
The inexorable!  
Out of primeval shadow they have stood  
In judgment over all.  
They brook not, these,  
Earth's gainsay, nor the sea's,  
Arbiters of our more, our less,  
Our nothingness.  
Apart, a few,  
They merge, divide,  
Or, gathering in multitudes anew  
Spread forth in armies.  
Their ancient law  
Still rules the world,  
Bids science halt or dare,  
Bids art beware.

Fact's own they are,  
Yet, counselling dream,  
Bright wings for thought's invasion of a  
    star,  
Fins for the diver's gleam,  
Unerring eyes  
To pierce the hidden skies,  
Unerring feet to enter  
The rock's dark center.

With lamps upheld,  
Austere and strong  
They wait behind the Muses. Sun-  
    impelled  
Apollo never outruns  
Their fleet throng.  
They guard a million suns!  
Mindful to mold a sapling's grace,  
A lily's face.

They forge the curse  
Of ways unlit.  
They are the heartbreak of the universe.  
They are the joy of it.  
Unseeing we pass  
Their pattern in the grass.  
But we are theirs, and they defy Eternity.

## TWO CANALS

The old canal forlorn, forsaken crawls,  
Its locks decayed and its low water stirred  
By minnows, all its past ensepulchred  
In whispering walls.

Here mystery holds the moments with  
delight.

The banks are dark with groves; the  
paths, half blotted,  
Struggle along the edges, bramble-knotted,  
Scentful as night.

The rough-hewn chasm is never entered  
now.

The steep walls, viny with forgetfulness,  
Out from their crevices push flower and  
cress

And greening bough.

And parallel, and half a mile away,  
The new canal, a broad deep channel,  
reaches



Across the prairie where the sunshine  
bleaches  
The grass all day.

Its lines are open to the eye and clear.  
New minds laid out the granite with new  
science,  
And new invention wrought for time's  
defiance  
The perfect gear.

Soon it shall bear high steamers on its  
breast;  
Soon, with the shedding forth of its  
renown,  
River shall tell to river, town to town  
The world's unrest.

Ah, but a tree, a vine, a rose? Not one!  
The banks stretch out monotonous and  
bare.

Naked and smooth the peerless walls  
upglare  
At the set of sun.

Men of to-day, build strong! The price  
we know.  
Bring to the land new steel, new stone,  
new faces!  
But it's in the crannies of the old, old  
places  
The flowers grow.

#### THE FORSAKEN PATH

How clear the young path wore,  
So fast and eagerly  
Morning and evenfall  
Friendship sped!  
But fateful words were spoken,  
And now from door to door  
Inimical eyes peer out,  
Rancor-fed.

Soon shall the golden-green  
Tall grasses cover it,  
The clover be aware  
And uncloset.

Where footsteps are forgotten  
The bergamot shall flame,  
Or the petalled symmetry  
Of a rose.

O path, O path! I wonder . . .  
Is nothing ever lost,  
No hasty utterance,  
No black hour?  
In rains unknown to us  
Drenched as the roots of love  
Shall even enmity  
Bear its flower?

#### ON THE JAIL STEPS

Young man, I'm free!  
Young man, I'm new!  
*Old Sallow-face,*  
*Good-luck to you!*

I've served my term,  
I've paid for sin.  
*And you come out,*  
*As I go in.*

Ten years! But, lad,  
I am free, free!  
*Ten years of dark*  
*Shall gather me.*

My wife—long years  
She wept her pain.  
*She cannot smile,*  
*She weeps again.*

My little child  
Shall know my call.  
*There is no child,*  
*For sin grows tall.*

Who are you, now,  
Spar of hell's flood?  
*And who, and who,*  
*But your own blood?*

## THE KEEPER OF THE LOCK

"The rich are talking of their money's  
worth,  
And the quiet lock must go.  
They're going to choke our blue canal to  
death  
With a road for public show.

I've let the narrow boats slip in and out  
These thirty years. They'll mock  
Our peacefulness with every hoot of hell,"  
Said the keeper of the lock.

"I love the lock with its banks of moss and  
flowers,"  
Said the daughter Marjory,  
"But the days are dull with never an  
outward sign.  
Now the world will come to me.

I shall be glad to hear new voices call,  
To discover some new face,  
I shall be glad to have a little fling  
In this wide and silent place."

Said the keeper of the lock, as he shook his  
head:

"The lock is life to me."

"It will be good to know a bit of life,"

Said the daughter Marjory.

### EVENING

Over the house the evening settled down.  
The little phaeton stood before the door.  
Out came her husband, strong and  
weather-tanned:

"Why, Judith, what on earth are you  
waiting for?"

He stroked the dappled pony—"And the  
boy?—

I thought you'd gone."

"We were just starting, when  
Will heard a droning, and he said to me:

'It's from the mine—I know the sound.

The men

Forgot to shut things off—I'll go and see.

Mother, you take the reins and wait a bit—

I won't be long.' And he's been gone at  
least  
Three quarters of an hour. And here  
I sit."

"He knows what he's about," said Alan.

"Well,  
There's time enough, Jude. Why, it  
isn't eight!  
You might stay out a little longer time,  
Taking the road around by Foster's Gate.  
I'm glad Will's learning how to run the  
mine.—

Here we've a coal-mine right on our own  
place,

And it'll go to him some day. How fine  
He is! It can't help showing in his face.  
I thought he might come home half-

heartedly,  
Feeling himself too tall for us, somehow  
Grown different in his ways, and wishing  
us . . .

Well . . . more . . . more"

"Alan, don't talk nonsense, now!  
You might have known he'd never change  
at all.

They couldn't make him love us any less,  
Not all the colleges your tongue could  
name."

"You're right enough, you're right enough,  
I guess."

"He'd rather take his mother for a drive  
Than be the governor of Illinois!  
That's what your son is like.—Why,  
there's the moon!

Alan, step back and see what keeps the  
boy."

And Alan, young at fifty, straight and  
proud,

Strode from the narrow box-path's mossy  
tiling

Over the lawn, under the cooling branches,  
And he was humming to himself, and  
smiling;

For all the scent and sound of evening  
mingled

In one voice, singing, "Our son!" The  
high grain-stack,



Crowned by the moon, where the long  
pasture ended,  
Sang out, "Our son!" And his heart sang  
it back.

He entered through a doorway in the  
ground.

Down in the mine he groped his way about,  
Calling, "Ho—Will!" But there was no  
responding.

And still went echoing Alan's shout on  
shout.

Now like a menacing troop of giant ills  
Dark in the mine loomed shadowy shapes  
of steel.

Dark in his brain a dream of dread arose.

A darker something whirled upon a wheel.

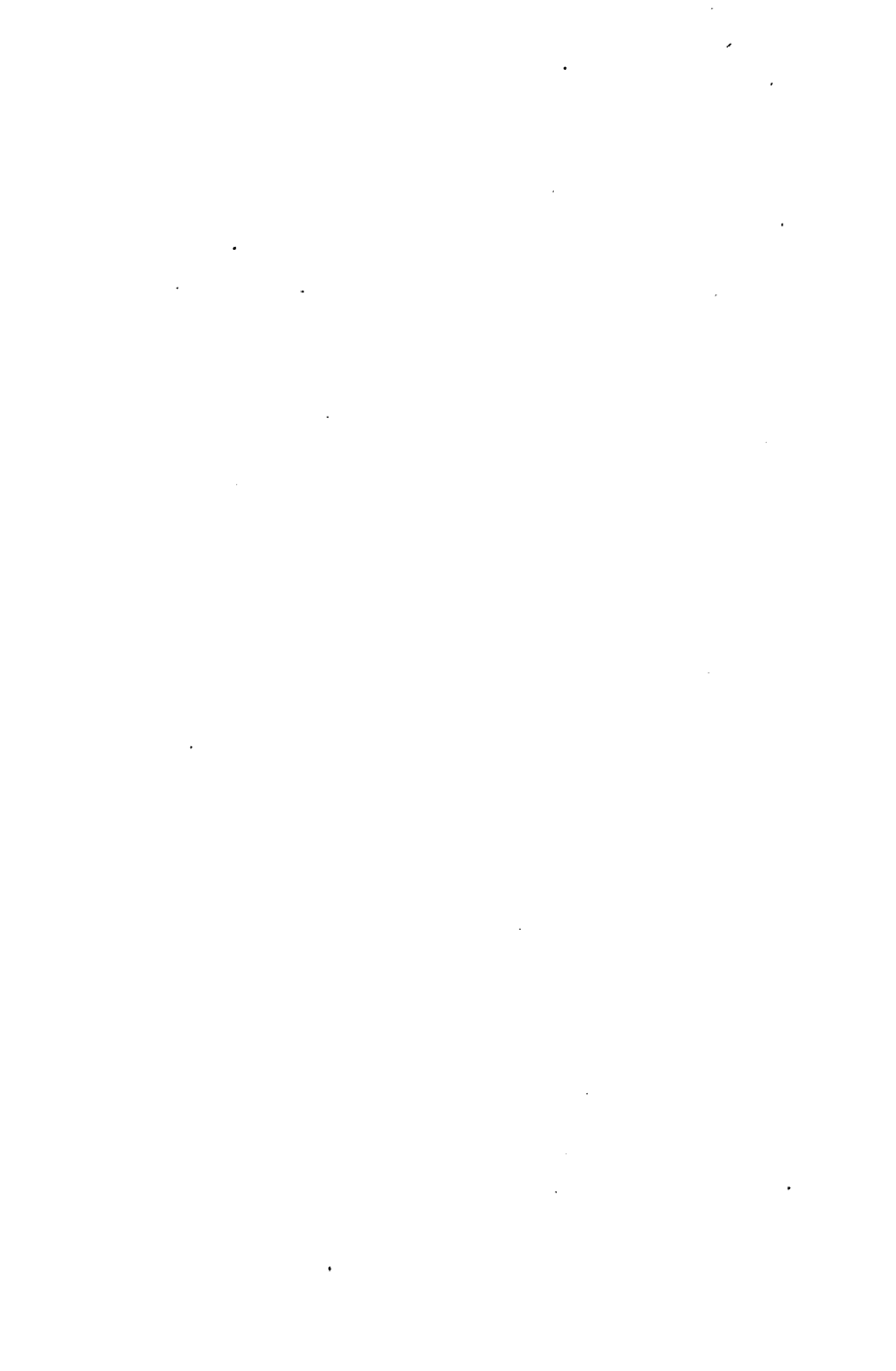
Agèd at fifty, he came out. No more  
Was any singing, for to him the air  
Was hushed forever, and earth's loveliness  
Sent up in vain its fragrance everywhere.  
Feeble and faint, at last he reached the  
lawn—

One thought, to be with her. He  
stumbled, fell,

---

And staggered up again, and almost ran—  
He must make haste with what he had to  
tell.

She waited, waited, looking and not  
seeing,  
Deep in a plan of trimming for a blouse.  
He stood there—and she knew, before he  
said:  
“Come, Jude, get down, come dear, come  
in the house.”



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V

~ ~ ~



# THE SILENT HOUSE

*A late afternoon in autumn. The cottage living-room of a scholar. The windows at the back look through a wood to the waters of a wide lake. David is sitting before the fire, his head bowed low over a letter crumpled in his hand.*

DAVID:

How may a letter bring such darkness  
down!

*(He reads from the letter)*

*Corinna dallies with your faith too long.  
And my word is the word of other men:  
She has no soul, no soul, for all her song!  
Why is it hearts like yours are always tied  
To little hearts that never comprehend?  
She may not take your measure nor your weight,  
Yet holds you hers to harrow to the end.  
You ask me if I see her. Many a night  
For many an hour I've seen her. David, man,  
I wish that you had watched her with my eyes.  
She led the dance, she led the caravan  
Of arbiters who came to hear her sing.  
Wine to her head were their too eager words.  
She circled round within a fiery ring,*

*And flashed the brighter out of every blaze.  
But since the last bethroned levee, I hear,  
Her doors are closed to all. A chill, they say.  
Some whisper, too, that she is gone from town.*

*(With an impatient gesture he throws the  
letter into the fire, and watches it burn. A  
long pause. He looks up, musing.)*

Forsaken, empty house upon the hill!  
Oh, it was there she found her quiet self!  
Why will she never know it, and return  
To windows calling her from her unrest  
To look on silver lake, on flower and fern?

*(Dreamily)*

Oh, for her nearness at the sunset's glow!  
To walk with her under perpetual trees,  
To share with her a stillness, to inspire  
The ardor in her eyes no other sees!

MARTHA *(Entering with flowers)*:

Sir, I have brought you flaming early  
asters

To give a bit of gladness to the room.  
And where I found them? Now you'll  
never guess!—

In the meadow by the hill—and all in  
bloom.

I gathered till my arms were brimming  
over.

DAVID:

The meadow of the little silent house!

MARTHA:

The city lured her from her viny door.  
But see, the flowers have stayed.

DAVID:

They seem to drowse  
And dream of one they lost, a paler flower.

MARTHA:

Then up I went close by the house. The  
blinds  
Are fast of late and all are intergrown  
With weedy havoc, as if no one minds.

DAVID:

How somber the sky has grown! A heavy  
rain  
Is in the air.

MARTHA:

I'll light the lamps.

DAVID:

Not yet.—

Leave me the beauty of the twilit hour.

MARTHA (*At the window*):

Hear the wind rising! How the moorings  
fret!



More than a simple shower is on its way.  
I would not be aboard of yonder ship,  
Hunted and hammered in the angry lake.  
Oh look, Oh look, Oh see it turn and dip!  
The helpless thing heads blindly on its  
path.

Now it goes plunging desperately under!  
Now it goes rearing, like a frightened  
horse!

DAVID:

What craft is this, and from what port, I  
wonder.

I can see figures.

MARTHA:

Can you see a light?

DAVID:

Now I see nothing. All is overcast.  
Here's the beginning of the rain, ah, hear  
it!

MARTHA:

God help the ships, the ships! No light,  
no mast.

A dim gray doom has swallowed every-  
thing.

God save the ships, the ships from the  
devil's mark!

*(She goes out)*

DAVID:

Corinna! Now I may recall her face.  
It is my light to think by in the dark. . .  
Yes, all my years of study, all the will  
Tenacious to achieve, the tempered strife,  
The victories attained through many a  
failure,  
Lie at the door of one dear human life.  
And yet . . . the letter . . . Oh, to  
break a spell  
Where all my stars are crumbling into  
dust!  
There never was a hope,—ah, well I know!  
I struggle on, and love because I must . .

Never a hope? Shall ever anything,  
Her silence, or alarm of written word,  
Or wild asseveration shake my dream?  
She loves me—by love's anguish, I have  
heard!  
We two from our soul-towers across a  
chasm

Are calling each to each, alert, aware.  
Shall one of us hail the other on a day,  
And no reply be borne upon the air?  
Corinna, come to me, my power, my love!  
Corinna, come to me, my soul, my breath!  
Rise high above the boundaries, and come,  
Over grief, gladness,—even over death!

*(There is a faint strain of song outside)*

Surely a little song I've heard before  
Seems striving on the air,—a villanelle,  
Half smothered by the gale's mad  
roisterers.

Why, that's the song she sang in Bracken  
Dell!

How the rain plashes, plashes on the  
windows

In heavy drops that presage wilder storm!  
The lake is lost within a lurid sheeting;  
The house upon the hill has changed its  
form.

The melancholy pine-trees weep together.  
And what's that clamor at the outer door?  
Martha, O Martha! Somebody is  
knocking!

MARTHA (*Re-entering*):  
The rain in the gutters,—I can hear it  
roar.

DAVID:  
No, someone's knocking. If you're deaf,  
I'll go—  
This is no night to leave a man outside.

MARTHA (*Muttering*):  
And is it I am going deaf a bit,  
And blind a bit, with other ill-betide!  
Well, I can see to thread a needle still,  
And I can hear the ticking of the clock,  
And I can fetch a basket from the village.  
But hallow me if I have heard a knock!

*(David has thrown open the door. He  
starts forward, stretching out his arms.)*

DAVID (*Coming back into the room, as if  
drawing someone with him*):

Corinna! You, Corinna! Drenched and  
cold!  
At last, at last! But how in all the rain!  
Martha!

*(Martha stands motionless, unseeing.)*

You are growing old, good Martha!  
Draw down the shades to hide the  
hurricane!  
Here, take the dripping cloak out of the  
room!  
Bring wine—the purple damson is the  
best,  
And light the lamps, the candles,—fire the  
gloom!  
Why do you mutter? Woman, here's a  
guest.

MARTHA:

You opened wide the door. In came the  
storm.  
But there was not a step upon the sill.  
All the black night let in no living shape.  
I see no guest. Look hard, sir, as I will,  
I see no one but you and my poor self.

DAVID:

Prepare the room that was my mother's  
room,  
Spread out warm garments, all the warmth  
you find,—

Her gown, the little shawl she used to  
wear.

*(Martha, wide-eyed, bewildered, lights the  
lamps and candles and goes out, raising her  
hands.)*

CORINNA

My moments with you fade and slip. O  
David,  
Something impelled me to you, some clear  
flame!

They said I had no soul, O David, yes,  
They said I had no soul! And so I came.  
I have been singing, singing all the way,  
Singing since everywhere the darkness  
grew

And I grew chill and followed the small  
light.

Hold me, dear, hold me, let me rest in  
you!

DAVID:

Corinna, child, what made you come to me  
Out of the silence into my heart's  
throbbing?

How did you know the sorrow I was in?

CORINNA:

A flock of leaves went sobbing, sobbing,  
sobbing.

DAVID:

The dear old days—they have come back  
again.

Corinna,—do you love me?

CORINNA:

O my dear,

I love you, love you!

DAVID:

Little did we guess  
Love would come back like this,—I,  
dreaming here,  
My heart a shaken storm,—the storm  
outside  
Shaken, shaken,—you, lightning of two  
storms.

CORINNA:

O David, your long misery and doubt!

DAVID:

They are the past, they are only shadowy  
forms.

CORINNA:

But show me all the shadows.

DAVID:

At first, alone,  
I went about lost in a haze of you.  
Ah, there were nights with every hour of  
lead,  
When my despair made nothing great  
seem true!  
But you would enter softly in the darkness.  
I heard your voice, and I could make it say  
The little words that bring the tones I  
love.

CORINNA:

You felt me loving you.

DAVID:

There would come times  
Of other thoughts. How often we have  
read  
How love reclothes the flowers and the  
trees.  
And all my world was newly dressed for  
me:  
Rewards seemed slight, and slighter  
penalties,  
Daily companionship was more and more.



To clear one path, to lend a hand to pull  
One load, was worth the best I had to give.  
And you, you had made all things wonderful.

CORINNA:

I have come back to you.

DAVID:

Never to go,—  
My festival rekindled from an ember!  
But, timid child, how could you come alone  
Through all the drenching dark?

CORINNA:

Do you remember?—  
Over the summer lake, one silvery,  
starry,  
Sweet night, when you and I were drifting,  
dear,  
I frightened at the shadow of a lily!  
It is all strange, but now I have no fear.

DAVID:

And you, do you remember?—After I  
Had pulled the boat ashore, with some  
new might  
I held you close. By the moon I could see

Your lips were white with love. Now they  
are white.

But oh, your eyes are sleepy! Let them  
close.

CORINNA:

I must go over to the silent house.

DAVID:

The dwelling stands forsaken up the steep,  
With never beast nor human to arouse!

CORINNA:

My house is waiting for me on the hill.  
There in an upper room the rising sun  
Shall see strange fingers plying  
dexterously,

Drawing the thread in linen newly spun.  
Soon all the gloomy windows will be  
lighted.

Hark, wheels toil up the hillside heavily!

DAVID:

I will go with you, child, into the dark.

CORINNA:

Strong arms are in the storm to carry me.

DAVID:

Not in these garments dripping as the  
boughs!

Not in these clinging shadows!

CORINNA:

Ah, soul-true  
Belovèd, I must go in these! To-morrow  
I shall be wearing white, all white, for you.

## THE STRANGER

*Martin works in the garden. Stephana stands at the cottage door. Upon a bench under the eaves are ranged three very small wooden cages, of the sort used by bird-sellers for their stock in trade.*

STEPHANA:

What lovelier day could be a holiday!  
Come, father, take your leisure.  
I brought the birds outside to preen their  
wings -  
And have a bit of pleasure.

MARTIN:

Twelve sold within a week,—and that is  
good.

STEPHANA:

And these?

MARTIN:

You never tire  
Of birds and birds. You'd like to own  
them all.

STEPHANA:

Oh, oh, the silly buyers!—  
I, keeping back my dearest three, and  
you,  
Praising, persuading, driving  
Your bargain, like the dear old cheat you  
are,  
Yet in your soul conniving! (*They laugh*)  
(*Soberly*)  
No more shall come to buy. And that's  
my dream.

MARTIN:

The sun is on the hedges.

STEPHANA:

How all the little upward petals glow!

MARTIN:

Look, there, along the ledges,—  
Do you see him now,—that worn and  
meager man?  
He's in the road . . . He's turning!

STEPHANA:

Perhaps a beggar bothering about.  
Well, well, he'll soon be learning  
We cannot heed so many passing here.

MARTIN:

See how he stoops and lurches!  
Now he has straightened up . . . Why,  
coming close,  
He seems to be as straight as yonder  
birches!  
He is even young!

STEPHANA:

No, no, his hair is gray.  
He's reached the stile . . . He's over.

MARTIN:

He has a word for us. Now here he comes  
Across the field of clover.

*(They nod to the man. He takes off his  
cap to them. The birds flutter)*

STEPHANA:

They are trying to say good-morning to  
you.

THE STRANGER:

*(He walks to the cages)*

Birds!

STEPHANA:

My father teaches over there at the  
school,  
And I'd be often lonely,

Except for these, my beautiful canaries.  
All would be happy . . . only . . .  
When they begin to love me off they go.

THE STRANGER:

The price, the price, forever.

MARTIN:

But after all, the price is all there is—  
We may be fools, or clever,  
It is the earthly cry of every being.

THE STRANGER:

Poor birds! No songs embolden  
Their breasts. Poor birds! Their eyes  
forget the sun.

STEPHANA:

But they are soft and golden.

THE STRANGER:

What narrow cells!

STEPHANA:

Yes, these are narrow homes.  
But many are no wider.

THE STRANGER:

Some houses are ample, tall, with skies for  
domes,  
And beauty for provider.

STEPHANA (*To Martin in a whisper*):  
Dread of my heart, the sign is on his brow!  
Look, father, he uncreases  
His leather pouch . . . look, now he's  
    fingering  
His horrid silver pieces!

MARTIN (*Whispering to Stephana*):  
You'll have a bit of satin home to try.

THE STRANGER:  
Birds! Yellow-bright as honey!  
Here's all I have—give me the birds. I'll  
    pay.

STEPHANA:  
Father, don't touch the money!

MARTIN:  
Hush, girl! Stranger, there's not a plan I  
    make  
But she must throw cold water.  
The birds are yours, man, and I thank  
    you.

THE STRANGER:

Mine!

MARTIN:  
Deuce take a whining daughter!



STEPHANA:

But O, whatever is your good of them?

THE STRANGER:

Why this, my Blossom-Lady:—

*Come, Yellow-Throat, come, Puff, and  
Speckle-Gem,*

*Come leave your little shanties!*

*(One after the other he opens the doors of  
the cages)*

*Hop, One,  
Out of your door.  
Fearing no more,  
Wing to the sun!*

*Hop, Two!  
Sidle along!  
Nothing is wrong—  
Summer is new.*

*Three, up!  
Over the hedge!  
Fly to the edge  
Of the sun's cup!*

*They are out and away  
Over hedge, over hay.  
Over hill, over stone*

*They have flashed, they have flown.  
They have winged, they have won!  
There is gold in the sun!*

MARTIN:

Stop grieving, girl, your tears won't bring  
them back.

STEPHANA:

Gone, gone my sweet companions!

THE STRANGER:

Freedom is worth the price of tears. Now,  
friends,  
I'm off to heights and canyons.

STEPHANA:

Ah, they will die, so high away, so far,  
The sport of wind and shadow!

THE STRANGER:

And that is where all creatures ought to  
die.

MARTIN:

Plague on his fine bravado!  
And yet the birds were his,—he paid, he  
paid.  
To hell or to the sky  
Let him follow them!

STEPHANA:

Go, stranger, go!—Ah, not  
Before I have your *why*!

THE STRANGER:

I was their fellow, in my cage, alone,  
Born of a world's blaspheming.  
I served my term, without a dream at  
heart,  
But this one song of dreaming:

*If ever you shall be  
Where the winds blow,  
Make, as you go,  
Fettered wings free.*

My cage was opened, little Blossom-  
Lady.  
I left the dark, the night.  
But, free at last, I could not face the  
heavens  
Till I could share the light.

## HER GOING

### THE WIFE:

Child, why do you linger beside her portal?  
None shall hear you now if you knock or  
clamor.

All is dark, hidden in heaviest leafage.  
None shall behold you.

### TRUTH:

Gone, gone, the dear, the beautiful lady!  
I was her comrade, I am here to lament  
her.

Ah, the day of her vanishing all things  
lovely

Shared in her fleetness!

Tell me her going.

### THE WIFE:

You are a child. How tell you?

### TRUTH:

I am a child, yet old as the earliest sorrow.  
Talk to me as you would to an old, old  
woman.

I own the ages.

**THE WIFE:**

Voices, they say, gossiped around her  
dwelling.  
She was aware, they say, and, wordless,  
departed.  
I am glad she is gone. The old hurt  
fastens.  
Hate is upon me.  
  
It was hard to live down the day, and  
wonder,  
Wonder why the tears were forever  
coming,  
Wonder if on his lips I tasted her kisses.

**TRUTH:**

Woman, be silent!  
Jealousy, mad, brooding blind and  
unfettered,  
Takes its terrible leap over lies and malice.  
Who shall question her now in the land of  
shadow?  
Who shall uphold her?

**THE WIFE:**

It was hard to know that peace had  
forsaken

All my house, to greet with a dull  
endeavor  
Babe or book, so to forget a moment  
I was forgotten.

TRUTH:

Who shall question her now in the land of  
shadow,  
Question the mute pale lips, and the  
marble fingers,  
Eyelids fallen on eyes grown dim as the  
autumn?  
Ah, the belovèd!

THE WIFE:

Go, go, bringer of ache and discord!

TRUTH:

Go I may not. Some, they think to  
inter me.  
Out of the mold and clay my visible  
raiment  
Rises forever.

THE WIFE:

Hers the sin that lured the light from our  
threshold,  
Hers the sin that I lost his love and grew  
bitter.

**TRUTH:**

Lost his love? You never possessed it,  
woman.

**THE WIFE:**

Sharp tongue, have pity! . . .

Yes, I knew. But I loved him, hoping  
for all.

I said in my heart: "Time shall bring  
buds to blossom."

I almost saw the flower of the flame  
descending.

Then she came near us.

He is mine, mine, by the laws of the ages!  
Mine, mine, mine, yes, body and spirit!  
I am glad she has gone her way to the  
shadow.

Hate is upon me.

Oh, the bar over which my soul would see  
All that eludes my soul! Clouds are  
before me!

Clouds are before me! Who shall dispel  
the clouds!

For he remembers!

## OLD MEMORY

*The old man sips his broth and reads his paper before the fire. His daughters whisper at a window. One of them holds a letter.*

### FIRST DAUGHTER:

I dread his knowing.

### SECOND DAUGHTER:

She was his favorite sister,  
Older than he, and very far away.  
Think of it—no one with her at the last!  
Better delay the telling. . . such a  
sorrow. . .

### FIRST DAUGHTER:

Ah, you remember how he loved our  
mother!  
And yet, last summer, after she had died  
He never seemed to take it hard at all.  
He seemed . . . too much resigned  
. . . too much himself.  
It would have killed him twenty years ago!



SECOND DAUGHTER:

It is the age they come to. Something  
goes out,  
Goes mercifully out. I often think  
They learn to take death as they take  
their broth,  
Their daily walk, their game of solitaire.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

And you and I, sister? Already youth  
Slips far and far behind us. Shall we,  
too . . .

SECOND DAUGHTER (*Tearfully*):

How can you say it? How can you say  
it? Oh! . . .

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Here comes old Nurse Lucretia up the  
street,  
Heavy with her dull robes, and hurrying  
To be the first to bear the word to him.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Sign to her, wave her away, wave her  
away!  
He has seen her close so many dead eyes!

FIRST DAUGHTER:

No,  
She has passed along, she was not coming  
in.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Hush, he may hear!

FIRST DAUGHTER:

His mind is on his paper.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Make some good reason, take the paper  
from him

Before he reads . . . the names . . .

Who knows but hers

Might be already there?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

It is too late.

His finger finds the column.

THE OLD MAN (*Calling*):

Here! See here!

Why, Adelaide is dead! My sister  
Adelaide!

DAUGHTERS:

O father, father!

THE OLD MAN:

I suppose it's true.

**FIRST DAUGHTER:**

A letter came. Now read it, deary, read it.

**THE OLD MAN:**

No, let it wait. So Adelaide is dead!

Well, she was restless—go and go she  
must,

First to this place, then that place, till at  
last

She settled in Nevada. As for me,  
Here I am still, and I shall count my  
hundred.

Well, well, well, well, so Adelaide is dead!

**THE DOLL**

**THE FATHER:**

There's something strange about the child  
tonight.

She stood and smiled as if she might be  
dreaming.

**THE MOTHER:**

This morning I went out to buy the dinner.  
I took her with me, for I couldn't leave  
her.

Well, she was tired from the time we  
started.

We went to see the window-show at  
Field's.

Oh my!—the dolls! From the first, one  
held her eye—

A girl, a life-size two-year-old, with a dress  
Hand-work all over, and silk socks and  
slippers.

She looked, and couldn't seem to turn  
away.

At last she said: "I want to be its mother."  
Then it came to me—what the doctor  
told us—

Her heart was queer, and we must humor  
her.

So I said: "You'll get it for a Christmas  
present."

Anyhow I've had peaceful hours since  
then.

She hasn't turned white, nor had a  
fainting-spell.

That shows she can be all right if she's a  
mind to.

But what on earth'll we say to her  
to-morrow?

THE FATHER:

We'll say how Santa Claus got stuck in  
the snow.

THE MOTHER:

Now hark, I hear her humming in her bed!  
She always hums, and never sings out  
words.

*The Child's Song they may not hear*

I shall hold her very close to me,  
With my love.

Oh! could anything more beautiful be  
Dreamed of?

She is coming. I must wait,  
I must wait.

THE MOTHER:

It's all because I let her go to school.  
I never was a one for education  
For children of her age. It gives 'em  
notions,  
And sets 'em looking up too high at things.

THE FATHER:

I'll just go out and look along the street.

The boys have stood a[ll] day there  
peddling toys.  
I'll buy a little rubber doll for her.

THE MOTHER:

Let her be satisfied with goose for dinner,  
And a bag of candy from the school-house  
tree.

*The Child's Song they may not hear*

I shall feel my baby's finger-tips.

Oh, to-morrow!

I shall kiss her on her lovely, darling  
lips.

Oh, to-morrow!

She is coming. I must wait,

I must wait.

THE MOTHER:

How can we tell her?—that's what's  
bothering me.

How can we tell her, tell her?—answer  
that!

Think of the dark she'll have in her eyes  
to-morrow,

When she comes looking, and it isn't here!

## EASTLAND WATERS

NIELS:

Now girls, now girls, cling on with all  
your might.  
Cling steady to this plank—don't lose  
your grit.

MARY:

Niels, will they all be saved?

NIELS:

Of course they will.  
They can't be drowned.

INGRID:

For everything's in sight.

MARY:

And we could almost touch the houses  
there.  
See how the steamer sank upon her side,  
Like a huge beast!

INGRID:

Listen—a baby cried!

NIELS:

Don't turn. Don't listen. Don't look  
anywhere.

MARY:

The human fish—see how they haul them  
in!

The slimy fish. Oh, this is awful, Niels!

INGRID:

They're everywhere! How cold the water  
feels!

NIELS:

Keep up your nerve—be the brave girls  
you've been.

MARY:

Soon we'll be safe. Nothing can harm us  
here,  
With all those little windows looking on.  
I feel your courage, Niels—my fear has  
gone.

NIELS:

Steady there, steady! Now the dock is  
near.

INGRID:

O Niels, I wish I had your arms around  
me! . . .  
It came, it came! I didn't mean to tell.  
Mary, you never dreamed . . . We  
kept it well.



Niels thought we mustn't speak it out.

He bound me . . .

NIELS:

Hush, hush!

INGRID:

He bound me not to say a word,  
Not to let others guess it in my face.  
But who could keep a secret in this place?  
And Mary, I am glad at last you've heard.  
And Mary, you shall fasten up my veil,  
And hold my book for me. Why, every-  
thing

Seems wonderful! Even here I want to sing!  
We'll have a little flat in Carbondale . . .

NIELS:

Ingrid, don't chatter on like this, I say.  
Mary . . . I meant to make it clear to  
you . . .

Mary!

INGRID:

Oh, look! oh, look!—her lips are blue!

NIELS:

Mary!

INGRID:

Oh, look! . . . Her hands have  
slipped away!

THE ASPHODEL  
(*An Episode of Honolulu.*)

I

*Mother and Child.*

THE CHILD:

What makes the world so beautiful, so  
quiet?

THE MOTHER:

Love makes it so.

THE CHILD:

Is love in everything?

THE MOTHER:

Sometimes it hides away from us, but  
always,

Somewhere, at every depth its wonders  
cling.

THE CHILD:

The world seems very beautiful,  
and yet . . .

THE MOTHER:

What yet? What are you thinking of,  
little son?

**THE CHILD:**

I heard the story of a company  
Packed close upon a ship,—the lepers.

One

Stood out from all the others, lean and  
bold,

Scaly, with eyes that pierced you through  
and through.

And when he looked at children they were  
frightened.

O mother, tell me that it was not true!

**THE MOTHER:**

It was not true.

**THE CHILD:**

And say there are no lepers.

**THE MOTHER:**

Of course there are no lepers, dear. It is  
A sick thought someone put into your  
mind.

The world is beautiful.

**THE CHILD:**

That look of his!

I shut my eyes and can't help seeing it!

**THE MOTHER:**

What silly stories people often tell!  
Lie still. Nothing will happen. Flower-  
bells  
Are closing. I must draw the curtains  
now.  
The misty moon is dreaming. In the  
garden  
The birds are falling asleep on every  
bough.

**THE CHILD:**

Where are my sisters? And the boys,  
where are they?

**THE MOTHER:**

It's May, you know. They've been in the  
woods for hours.  
Soon they'll be coming home again, my  
deary,  
For it's late, there's rain in the air.

**THE CHILD**

Will they bring us flowers?

**THE MOTHER:**

Ah, they'll bring flowers for you, dear!  
As for me,—  
You are my flower.

THE CHILD:  
Do leper men like flowers?

THE MOTHER:  
I said there are no leper men, remember.  
O darling, see, your mother's arms are  
    round you!  
O darling, see how safe you are to-night!  
Here is a drink in your own silver cup.  
It is more sweet than water, little brother.  
Raise your dear golden head and have a  
    sip.

THE CHILD:  
Another sip. I like it. Now another.

THE MOTHER:  
The children have come back! They're  
    on the terrace.  
They're talking of you, little brother,  
    saying  
How much they love you. Cuddle close  
    and listen,—  
I'll sing you what they send you from the  
    Maying.

(*She sings.*)  
At twilight in the curtained room,

Quite near a Dreamland town,  
Upon your little bed, you dear,  
A pearly dove lit down,—

Bearing four kisses—they were clothed  
As English flowers—and then  
He left them gently one by one  
And flew away again.

Louise's was a lily-kiss  
Upon your shining hair.  
I'll touch it: yes, my fingers feel  
The lily resting there.

On one the dew was glistening  
Like rays from Fairyland.  
Hugh gave his loveliest columbine  
To blossom in your hand.

And David said his kiss should be  
A yellow daffodil.  
It nestles on your shoulder now,  
Fragrant and soft and still.

And oh—the woodland's dearest flower!—  
Fresh from her finger-tips  
Stephana sent a sweet wild rose

To lie upon your lips.

THE CHILD:

Four kisses all dressed up as English  
flowers! . . .

The dove goes flying off to some high  
tower . . .

There is another kiss . . . I feel it,  
mother . . .

Not one the dove brought, but a stranger-  
flower.

THE MOTHER:

And all within the curtained room,  
Watching unseen, apart,  
An angel brought an asphodel,  
And laid it on your heart.

THE CHILD:

What is the matter with your voice?  
. . . Please sing!

I am too sleepy for the words . . .  
but sing!

THE MOTHER:

*(She Sings.)*

Who'll know him?

Who'll see him?—

He is so small for Eternity.  
God! Hear me!  
Christ's mother!  
Mother my little one for me!

## II

*(In the Morning)*

*The Children.          The Mother.*

DAVID:

What a long time we've waited at the door!

HUGH:

How still the house is! I can't hear a  
sound.

LOUISE:

I have a funny joke I heard, to tell him.

STEPHANA:

I want to give him this blue shell I found.

HUGH:

Why does she make us stay away from  
him?

Why does she keep him hidden from us all?

LOUISE:

I saw his face at the window yesterday.



STEPHANA:

Why won't she answer? She must have  
heard us call.

LOUISE:

She's coming . . . She's unfastening  
the door!

HUGH:

Mother! Mother! You look so strange  
and white!

DAVID:

Mother! Where is he? We have come for  
him.

THE MOTHER:

Children, your little brother died last  
night.

